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ABSTRACT

U.S. educational events during 1987 included plans for a national board to certify teachers, federal appeals court decisions that overturned Tennessee and Alabama textbook censorship cases, the U.S. Supreme Court's finding as to the unconstitutionality of Louisiana's creation science law, and concern about rapid increases in college costs. This document highlights events that involved: (1) educational reform programs; (2) the courts and fundamentalists; (3) curriculum concerns; (4) controversy over U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett's policies and proposals; (5) reports that were critical of educational programs; (6) polls; (7) bilingual education; (8) teacher certification reform; (9) congressional hearings; (10) teacher pay; (11) educational costs; and (12) governors' reports. Great Britain advanced its most ambitious school reforms since 1944, prepared to introduce a national curriculum, and planned a policy that would permit parents to remove schools from the largely labor-dominated Local Education Authorities and place them under central government control. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's educational policies and plans for primary and secondary schools and for universities are summarized. U.S. statistical data concerning enrollments, teachers, graduates, and expenditures are appended. (JHP)

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by

Franklin Parker

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Education Events USA/Britain 1987 (to Oct.)
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U.S. school events in 1987 included plans for a national board to certify teachers, federal appeals court decisions which overturned two textbook censorship cases (Tennessee, Alabama), Louisiana's creation science law declared unconstitutional, and concern about the rapid rise in college costs. Abroad, Britain's most ambitious state school reform since 1944 will introduce a national curriculum and by parent vote allow central government takeover of local schools.

School Reform. On April 5, U.S. Education Secretary William J. Bennett blasted "education bureaucrats" in Indiana, Texas, Maine, and Michigan for cutting back on reform efforts because they felt costs were too high. Education leaders in these and other states disputed Bennett and insisted that reform was indeed threatened by federal cuts and insufficient state and local funds. California state school chief Bill Honig said, "The concept...that you can have reform at no cost just doesn't work." An Oregon school official said, "To get school improvement you need

dollars. And we aren't getting the dollars." Other leaders said that school reform was "on track" and that disagreement was "over what direction reform should take."

An April 13-released report by William Chance, The Best of Educations: Reforming America's Public Schools in the 1980s, said reform needs better "professionalized teaching," early schooling, testing, and assessment. He said that to be professionals, teachers must accept differentiated merit pay, evaluation, and more rigorous, relevant training. The educational establishment has allowed students to be "'schooled' without being 'educated'." True reform needs a return of "public control."

On June 16 New York Times education writer Fred Hechinger saw "no revolutionary upsurge" in school reform, only small incremental change; he feared a decline without bold moves on the national level.

A June 20 Southern Regional Education Board high school report confirmed stricter graduation requirements and more students taking academic courses in its 15 states than in 1981. But student achievement must be more vigorously assessed to prove reform. There was dismay at the 1985 dropout rate (22.3% in Maryland, 45.3% in Louisiana; national dropout rate, 29.4%.)

To aid school reform, Bennett has advocated allowing parents to select alternative neighborhood schools, public or private, and pay by vouchers. The National Education Association (NEA) disagrees, stating that when brighter children leave, poorer public schools are worse off.

Former U.S. Education Secretary Terrel H. Bell believes that school reform has not benefited the 30% low-income minority students. Tennessee's new education commissioner said that school reform with such ideas as merit pay for best teachers came from business and "was a top-down movement" with "no feeling of ownership by local schools, teachers, and principals."

Yet, a September Congressional Budget Office report doubted that higher student achievement resulted from the reform reports alone. Higher scores antedated the reports; scores might have risen without them.

Courts Defeat Fundamentalists. Higher federal appeals courts overturned textbook censorship cases in Hawkins County, Tennessee, August 24, and in Alabama, August 26. A fundamentalist lawyer said, "We don't think this is the final decision.....It's just a whistle stop on the way to the U.S. Supreme Court."

The U.S. Supreme Court by 7-2 vote on June 19 declared unconstitutional Louisiana's 1981 law requiring teaching creation science (based on Genesis) when evolution was taught in public schools. Nobel laureates and science organizations had filed court briefs against creation science as religion, not science. A relieved Louisiana school administrator said, "We don't have the money now to be spending on bad science." A fundamentalist leader vowed: the U.S. Supreme Court "won't stay the same forever." A leading biologist said, "the larger struggle is not over and never will be."

What Students Learn. On March 22 The Nation's Report Card: Improving the Assessment of Student Achievement recommended enlarging the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a federal program since 1968 which tests students in reading, writing, literacy, and math at least every five years. The report urged additional testing by 1990 in science, technology, history, government, and civics; publishing state-by-state findings (rather than comparing four U.S. regions); increasing the present 70,000 students tested annually to 675,000 at a cost of $26 million a year (now $4 million). The prestigious National Academy of Education endorsed the report, warning that NAEP might lead

to a national curriculum. Bennett approved the report and will try to find funds for it. National Education Association (NEA) President Mary Hatwood Futrell also feared a national curriculum. She said state comparisons might limit teachers and local school options. The NAEP policy committee on May 30 also feared a national curriculum and federal control.

Bennett Stirs Controversy. In his third year, contentious U.S. Education Secretary Bennett continued to advance President Reagan's education ideas: federal fund and program cutbacks, private over public schools through vouchers, and prayer and moral values favored by fundamentalists. In the proposed $4.1 billion 1988 budget for Chapter 1 (compensatory or remedial aid for poor and minority-laden school districts), Bennett downplayed a provision for parent use of vouchers for either private or public schools, which the last Congress rejected. To overcome congressional opposition, Bennett would limit Chapter 1 vouchers to consenting school districts. He would also set aside 1% of funds for parents' involvement in schools' "program innovations."

Bennett also scored sex education programs that fail to emphasize sexual restraint. His state-by-state school achievement report card in wall chart form was criticized as "simplistic, incomplete, and possibly

misleading." The NEA noted that the federal percentage of public school costs fell from 7.4% three years ago to 6.5% in 1985, and that such cuts may have "flattened out the curve of educational progress." Educators also resented his claim that an uncontrollable "blob" of educator-bureaucrats, expanding even when enrollments fall, is devouring money better spent in the classroom. Opponents answered that administrators account for only 6.6% of all public school employees, compared with 30% in banking.

Chairman Paul Simon (D-IL) of the Senate Education, Arts, and Humanities Subcommittee gave Bennett a C-minus grade for his "sophomore" year. NEA President Futrell said, "He seems more interested in sparring with us than in sitting down and solving problems."

Critical Reports. Two accounts of the same research gave 17-year-olds "failing marks" in literature and history. Findings were in American Memory, August 30, by National Endowment for the Humanities chairwoman Lynne V. Cheney; and in What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, September 8, by the original researchers, Teachers College Columbia University Professor Diane Ravitch and U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Research Chester E. Finn, Jr. Less important than who published first were the faults found: many students did not know basic

facts about Christopher Columbus, 30%; Watergate, 20%; and George Washington, 58%; many could not identify novels by Dostoevsky and Hemingway. The authors want teacher education upgraded, more communication between teacher education professors and history and literature professors, and higher college admission requirements. Some educators emphasized that motivation to learn our heritage is more important than memorizing facts.

Two 1987 best sellers critical of public schools and higher education were Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students; and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Cultural Literacy. Philosophy Professor Bloom said colleges gave in to late1960s activists, abandoned liberal arts, and taught "relevant" studies where all ideas have equal value. He called today's students sex-ridden money grubbers marching to rock music. English Professor Hirsch said that by not teaching the unifying facts and values of Western culture, schools produce a generation of cultural illiterates. Hirsch blasted educational philosopher John Dewey for urging learning skills rather than memorizing essential information. Hirsch, like Bloom, wants a return to the liberal arts. Harvard University President Derek Bok

faulted the authors for using education as a scapegoat for social ills. A Chicago high school principal with mainly Hispanic students said, "We've got to educate everyone--even the 35 IQs"; trouble begins before school in poor and noisy homes; we do not attract and reward good teachers.

Blacks and women leaders scored Bloom for calling black studies and women's studies low level and irrelevant college subjects. A critic said, "The real bastions of democracy are probably not those elite universities to which Mr. Bloom constantly refers." Another said Hirsch's list of "what every American needs to know" reflects only what one cultural group thinks. Another said the books' popularity argued against their theme: where but in a well-educated country would so many people read these two books critical of education?

Polls. A Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on August 27 found 76% of those polled favored tougher school standards, 80% were for federal aid to school programs involving social problems, 71% for parents choosing their children's schools, 44% for and 41% against vouchers to spend at either public or private schools, and 72% for liberal arts degrees for teachers. Chief problems listed were: drug abuse (second consecutive year), discipline, low financial support, too few good teachers, poor curriculum

and standards, overcrowding, and low moral standards. Schools were graded A by 12% (most A's since 1975); B, 31%; C, 30%; D, 9%; F, 4%; and no opinion, 14%.

A September Louis Harris poll for the Metropolitan LIfe Insurance Company found that 51% of teachers polled blamed students' poor performance on their being left alone after school; 44% blamed automatic promotion; and 43% blamed teachers for not adapting to individual student needs. Widespread student aloneness after school was attributed to one-parent homes, working mothers, and conflicting work-school schedules. Most teachers (85%) said they were satisfied with their profession.

Bilingual Education. Educators and politicians are divided on how to educate the 1.5 million children, ages 5-17 (.5 million in California), whose home language is not English. Educators favoring bilingual education are being shaken by English-immersion pressures. Los Angeles (L.A.) teacher union members in the summer voted 78% for English immersion teaching, with native language help by bilingual aides, and rejected the present native language transition to English. Because California is watched nationally, the L.A. teachers' support of English

immersion combined with the governor's summer veto of native language transition may hasten English immersion nationally. California is one of some 14 states to adopt English as the official language (over 12% of the U.S. population will be of Asian or Hispanic background by 2000 A.D). U.S. Education Secretary Bennett does not believe bilingual education works; he wants to expand the present 4% maximum of congressional education funding set aside for English-only instruction, to 25%. The bilingual/all-English language conflict in public schools remains unresolved.

Teacher Certification Reform. A 33-member planning group met May 14-16 in San Diego to launch the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Urged by the 1986 Carnegie Forum on Education and The Economy report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, NBPTS will set standards for teacher entrance, training, grading, ethical behavior, retention, advancement, censure, and dismissal. The idea is to certify teachers nationally as competent professionals, as physicians do. Still unresolved is how NBPTS certification will fit with established state department of education certification. Many wondered how to involve school administrators, local school board members, and

other education groups (NBPTS bylaws require most board members to be teachers). The American Association of School Administrators president called NBPTS "an attempted takeover of American schools by the teacher unions....." The National School Boards Association president said, "the final decision as to who's going to be hired and who's not going to be hired" will still "rest with the local board of education." Some said that if NBPTS is to assure expert teachers, its members should be mostly subject-matter specialists. Another said, "The real issue is trust. Teachers don't trust superintendents and principals."

Doubt was cast on ending undergraduate education majors and requiring only fifth year teacher education, as urged by the Holmes Group of 96 research university education deans. A National Council of Teachers of English leader said we need "the study of pedagogy, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels."

NBPTS's wider plan is to professionalize teaching; restructure schools to give teachers more autonomy; improve minority education; recruit more minority teachers; and create a career ladder with salary steps based on experience, further education, competency measured by tests and by student achievement, and with "lead teachers" as highly paid school

leaders.

A May 1986 Louis Harris poll reported 87% of the public and 70% of business leaders polled supported NBPTS when first proposed. The hope is that, ultimately, its 63 members will represent varied education interests. Board planning member Albert Shanker called it "A bold step forward" to capture the same respect, status, and pay the public gives doctors and lawyers.

Congressional Hearings. Hearings on "Quality of the American Workforce" by the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, September 23-November 19, looked at the educational shortcomings of U.S. workers. Said hearings organizer, Congressman James Scheuer (D-NY): many unskilled and semiskilled American workers, undereducated and some illiterate, are "now competing with...well educated workers in other countries who are willing to work for much lower wages...." If we can't "educate these people...we can confidently expect to see our national income steadily decline."

Even before the congressional hearings, Rand Corporation executive Arthur E. Wise said: a consensus has grown that America's economic competitiveness requires a well educated workforce which in turn

requires restructured schools with teachers as respected professionals. He said, "The old system" of teacher education "is being shaken to its roots." He mentioned that 37 university presidents, led by Stanford University's president, met in September to respond to educational issues raised in the Carnegie Forum's 1986 A Nation Prepared. They issued a long open letter beginning with: "We presidents and chancellors have a special role to play in making teaching a more professional activity...."

Rising interest in teaching careers among undergraduates was indicated in a recent national survey which found 7.3% of college freshmen considering teaching, up from 4.7% in 1982. Their interest is spurred by availability of teaching jobs and rising salaries.

Teacher Pay. U.S. teachers' salary raises averaged 7.7% during 1984-86, far exceeding inflation. But the current national average of $26,704 is less than salaries in the more esteemed professions. Top teacher pay averages were $43,970 in Alaska; $33,797, District of Columbia; $32,620, New York; $31,500, Michigan; and $31,170, California. Average new teacher starting salary was $17,800, with six states offering over $19,000 to beginners.

College Costs Rise. The College Board in August found college

tuition and fees up 5% to 8% for 1987-88, outstripping inflation for the seventh consecutive year. Tuition and fees averaged $1,359 a year at public colleges and $7,110 at private colleges, or 6% to 8% over 1986-87. Two-year college tuition and fees were $687 at public colleges and $4,058 at private colleges, or 5% to 6% over 1986-87. When U.S. Education Secretary Bennett said colleges take advantage of available federal aid to college students to raise costs, college officials angrily disagreed. A September survey found Americans worried about higher college costs, attributed to higher costs for faculty and energy.

Governors' Reports. Believing that better education will lead to more jobs in their states, the National Governors' Association in August issued three reports. Educating Americans for Tomorrow's World: State Initiatives in International Education asked schools to produce workers internationally aware, computer literate, who know languages, mathematics, geography, foreign languages, and college-taught international understanding. "We're involved in a global economy, and our future growth depends on how we do in international competition," said California Governor Deukmejian. Bringing Down the Barriers wants welfare recipients to receive benefits contingent on their receiving

education or job training. Results in Education: 1987, noting that in 1986 the states paid over half (50.1%) of school costs, wants the reform movement to "use the current level of resources more effectively."

International

England and Wales. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's June 11 reelection assured vast changes in Britain's state schools. Her party's Great Education Reform bill went to Parliament in November. It calls for a national core curriculum for 90% of school time; more power for school heads over their largely Labor Party-oriented unionized teachers; parental choice by majority vote to remove individual schools from largely Labor-dominated Local Education Authorities and to put them under central government control; required national testing at ages 7, 11, and 14; and open school enrollment with funds based on the number of students attracted.

Critics say the controversial "opting out" by parents' vote from local authority to national Department of Education and Science (DES) control and funding is a deliberate Conservative plan to weaken local government (largely Labor influenced), strengthen central government, cut back on comprehensive schools that grew out of the democratizing 1944 Education

Act, and so be able to increase privileged grammar schools. Critics say affluent parents will remove schools from local control and operate them as privileged schools, that national tests will funnel some children into nonacademic programs, and that free choice schools will benefit the affluent at the expense of the poor and the minorities.

Thatcher's opting out plan compares with Reagan's voucher plan, both emphasizing parents' choice and tending to group middle class students away from poorer ethnic students. Critics call the Thatcher school bill "damaging, dangerous and divisive." It emasculates local government, leaves little room for curriculum diversity and development, and brings back selective grammar schools in place of comprehensive schools.

Labor critics blasted Thatcher's education record since coming to power in 1979: state school funds cut from 14.3% to a current 12.7% of public expenditures; nursery schools for fewer than one-fourth of three and four-year-olds; 1,575 primary schools and 312 secondary schools closed; 36,000 teaching jobs removed; university entrants reduced by 6,000 a year after 1980; and the value of student grants cut.

Higher Education. Thatcher plans to replace the semiautonomous University Grants Committee, which allots government funds to

universities, with a University Funding Council, which will contract with individual universities for teaching and research funds that fit government priorities. City Technology Colleges are planned, started by large industrial contributions, with regular costs met by the DES. Critics see this move as another way to replace local education-financed further education (for those age 16+), including polytechnical colleges, with central government-controlled and financed technical colleges. Closer ties with industry are urged, with subsidies from private sources, so that higher education will serve Britain's economy better. The government also proposes to abolish university tenure, a move that, strangely, has evoked little controversy because only half the universities grant tenure anyway and because over 1,000 scientists and engineers leave Britain each year for better jobs abroad. Many see similarities in how Conservatives in Britain and the U.S. are trying to make schools and universities serve business interests better.

U. S. Public and Private Schools

	1987-88	1986-87
Enrollment		
Kindergarten through Grade 8	32,200,000	31,700,000
High School	13,500,000	13,700,000
Higher education	12,300,000	12,400,000
Total	58,000,000	57,800,000
Number of Teachers		
Elementary and secondary	2,600,000	2,600,000
Higher	700,000	700,000
Total	3,300,000	3,300,000
Graduates		
Public and private high school	2,737,000	2,677,000
Bachelor's degrees	1,001,000	995,000
First professional degrees	75,000	74,000
Master's degrees	294,000	293,000
Doctor's degrees	34,000	34,000
Expenditures		
Public elementary-secondary school	$168,600,000,000	$158,300,000,000
Private elementary-secondary school	15,100,000,000	14,200,000,000
Public higher	81,300,000,000	75,600,000,000
Private higher	42,700,000,000	40,300,000,000
Total	$307,700,000,000	$288,400,000,000

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